



## Holiday Care for Pets

Holidays are complicated when you have pets. What are you going to do with them? Do you take your pets with you or leave them behind?

Preferably you won't do what some irresponsible holidaymakers do. Those who simply find a pet too much an inconvenience and think nothing of dumping their cat or dog. Leaving your pets unattended at home is also not an option. Such lonely animals often escape when the boredom of solitude hits. These stray pets often suffer injuries from accidents and they can become lost. However, most people are very responsible and want to ensure their pets are safe while they are away.

### What are the options for holiday care of pets?

- Boarding your pet
- Home visit services
- House sitters
- A holiday with relatives
- Holiday health care
- Boarding in the homes of dog lovers

### What are the options for holiday care of pets?

Many folk couldn't bear to be without their pets when they go off for some rest and recreation. If you can take your pets with you then they will enjoy the change in routine as much as you.

Be careful if you are going camping and save embarrassment. Many camping grounds are National Parks where pets are totally prohibited.

The book *Holidaying with Dogs* lists a variety of camping grounds and accommodation alternatives that allow dogs. Also available is the *Holidaying with Cats* book for those wishing to travel with their puss cats.

### Boarding your pet

If you are intending to book your dog or cat into a boarding kennel, then ensure you do so months before. Many boarding kennels and catteries book out for the Christmas and Easter

holidays months in advance. Other holiday periods are almost as bad.

There are many reputable boarding kennels that will look after your pet very well while you are away. Get recommendations from friends and from your veterinarian, and visit the kennel if possible to satisfy yourself. Ask about feeding, playtime, and what happens if your pet gets sick.

### Home visit services

Several organisations offer a home visit service for pets. With such services, the pets are left at home and the caregiver visits during the day to feed and exercise the pets. They will water your plants and also provide other services. For pets with the right temperament, this is a good alternative. A close neighbour is a great alternative.

However, be aware that your pet will still be alone for most of the day and many pets will not tolerate this. If your pet is very attached to you it may be not be content if you are gone for a long period and another alternative may be better.

### House sitters

Many folk will have a house sitter stay in their home when they are away. The pets often enjoy the new face and the small change in routine. Naturally, the house sitter needs to have good credentials, or enlist a friend or relative.

This is the best option for your fish or birds. Leaving your fish

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for the weekend may be fine, but leaving them for longer with feeder blocks usually ends up in disaster, and blackouts might mean the filter stays off (or runs dry). A check each day can prevent this and a quick water change can be done if the water looks too murky. Needless to say you need to show someone what to do - it is not an urban myth that a person fed the fish without removing the tank lid and the fish starved for a week! Birds, too, need daily care and are best cared for in their home environment.

### **A holiday with relatives**

Alternatively, having your pets cared for at the home of a friend or relative is a good idea. If this is your preference, check that the fences will prevent your pet escaping. Why not take your pet to visit this friend a few times before the holiday so it can acquaint itself with their house and garden?

### **Holiday health care**

No matter the system of care you use when you are on holiday, be sure to fully identify your pet with tags or a microchip. Should your pet roam while you are away, identification will assist in its return to you, otherwise you may never see it again.

Remember that your pet will need to have its vaccinations up to date before being admitted into the kennels. For your pet's protection, its vaccinations should be given at least 10 days before the date of boarding as the vaccines won't cause immunity immediately.

Have your dog vaccinated with the C5 vaccine as this covers your dog for both of the germs that can cause Canine Cough and those that cause Distemper, Parvovirus and Canine Hepatitis virus. Canine Cough is a contagious upper respiratory condition that can be a problem wherever dogs group together - especially in kennels. A C7 also protects against Leptospirosis and Canine Coronavirus.

For cats, the F3 vaccine is the minimum needed but you may also like to consider getting Puss vaccinated with an F4 or F5 - Feline Leukaemia and Feline Chlamydia are two common conditions for which vaccines have only recently been developed. A new vaccine against Feline AIDS is also available. Your vet will recommend which vaccines are most suitable for your cat.

This is also a good time to have your dog or cat wormed with an all-wormer tablet and to check that their heartworm preventative is up to date. Don't forget a bath or at least a good flea treatment is essential. If your pet is on medication of any sort, for example for arthritis or anxiety disorders, now is a good time to ensure you are well stocked with medication.

If you are travelling with your pet this summer, check with your vet if you are going to a tick prone area to ensure you have adequate paralysis tick prevention, know how to search for ticks and what to do if you find one. Get the number of the local vet in the area you are travelling to, and check out their location so you are prepared in an emergency. Don't forget to keep an eye out for snakes, too!

With a little forethought, you and your pets will have a happy holiday and you won't be dogged by the hassles that hound many others.

### **Boarding in the homes of dog lovers**

Worried about sending your dog to a boarding kennel or leaving it at home alone? How would like to have your dog minded by a caring family who will take it into their home and spoil it, so can you can enjoy your holiday? An alternative to kennels, house sitters and relying on friends and neighbours is provided by the company Don't Fret Pet, who arrange for dogs to be boarded in the homes of dog lovers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Canberra and Adelaide. Contact 1300 30 70 21 for further information.